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Peter Walker
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Dear Mr Walker

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Crofton Academy

Following my remote inspection with Chris Davies, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 4 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, this monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- check that support for pupils who struggle to read fluently helps them to improve quickly.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, one deputy headteacher has left the school. You have appointed two new assistant headteachers and a new school business manager. In May 2020, the school joined Castleford Academy Trust.
- Across the autumn term 2020, just over half of pupils were taught remotely on at least one occasion.
- At the time of this inspection, a small proportion of pupils were attending the school site, including the school's on-site resource base for visually impaired pupils. This includes around a fifth of pupils identified as vulnerable and a third of pupils with an education, health and care plan.

Main findings

- Leaders have a clear plan for ensuring pupils access education either remotely or on site. They have provided effective training and support for staff to teach remotely. Leaders monitor the attendance and participation of pupils in remote education, which have increased across this term.
- Leaders have adapted subject content to prioritise topics that can be taught remotely. For example, in mathematics and history, leaders have changed the order of some parts of topics. Content which has not been taught this term will be taught when pupils return to school. The academy's wider focus on identifying clear 'steps' in learning has supported these decisions.
- Pupils who are learning on site are taught the same curriculum as those learning remotely. Pupils on site are well supported by a range of staff. This includes senior leaders, pastoral leaders and learning support assistants. Pupils who are learning remotely can ask for extra help during live lessons or by contacting their teacher.
- Leaders maintain regular contact with vulnerable pupils who are not being educated on site. This is done through phone calls and home visits. The school provides 'live' tutor sessions and assemblies in order to support pupils' well-being. The school is quick to act if there is a concern about a pupil's well-being or safety.

- Leaders continue to focus on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have worked closely with families and found creative ways to support pupils remotely, for example by using voice recordings. Pupils with SEND who are learning on site are supported by their usual support staff.
- The school has focused on developing the knowledge of Year 11 pupils. There are also plans to provide extra support to Year 11 pupils when they return to school. This includes additional classes for pupils who intend to study A-level science.
- Leaders have clear plans to develop pupils' reading, although these plans have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders know how important reading is to enable all pupils to do well in all subjects. Leaders intend to resume these plans as soon as possible, with a specific focus on the weakest readers and those with gaps in their learning.
- Governors have regularly supported and challenged leaders' approach to remote education. They have considered the attendance and participation of pupils, and the support for vulnerable pupils. Governors have also continued to support leaders in focusing on wider strategic priorities.
- Leaders, staff and governors are very positive about the support they receive from the multi-academy trust (MAT). The MAT has supported leaders in planning for remote education. The MAT has also supported wider school improvement by working closely with senior leaders. The school has also received MAT support for curriculum development in science and design technology.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also saw examples of remote education provided by the school. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 110 free-text responses, and 90 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Castleford Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Jenner
Her Majesty's Inspector